Foreword

114 the first impression made on him by Aden was not favourable, and I have what in retrospect is a rather diverting recollection of how, about a week after his arrival, he asked leave to explain to me that he did not like the look of Aden, the look of its people or, in fact, anything about it, and that he wished to be sent back to India as soon as possible. As again in the case of many, indeed most, others whose lot it has been to live in Aden for some time, his feelings were soon reversed, and he developed an interest in Aden and its welfare and an affection for its people, which they, when they came to know him, warmly reciprocated.

The second appointment which Hickinbotham held in Aden gave him the opportunity to come into closer touch with the inhabitants of the Colony and their affairs. He became Civil Secretary, a post which has since disappeared but was analogous to the present Chief Secretaryship. To his responsibilities as Civil Secretary were added from time to time a surprising number of other divergent duties, which included Judge of the Sessions Court, Inspector of Education and Superintendent of Customs, Salt and Excise.

Those functions must have helped him to expand his wide
[504] understanding of various aspects of Aden life. Next, after an interval of some years spent in countries neighbouring the Persian Gulf, Hickinbotham returned to Aden as Chairman of the Port Trust, a post of vital importance to the Colony whose commercial prosperity was founded on and is still dependent upon the activities of the port. It had been usual for this appointment to be held by an engineer, a qualification which Hickinbotham, in spite of his versatility, did not possess. But during the time that he had previously lived in Aden he had acquired an intimate acquaintance with the life of the harbour through his personal interest in ships and boats and in the local people who earned their living in Aden waters.
• [123] This and a natural grasp of business and finance enabled him to preside over the semi-autonomous Port Trust Board with complete success, and this further widening of his practical dealing with Aden's administration led in 1951 to his appointment as Governor of Aden.

2: Hickinbotham G-4, 5 (ca. 1931-ca. 1957)
1953 MM1 Aden MM1

Foreword

Now at last Hickinbotham occupied a position in which the scope of his responsibilities included the Aden Protectorate as well as the Colony of Aden, for as Governor and Commander-in-Chief he was Governor of the Protectorate as well as Governor of the Colony. It has been thought by some that the term "Governor of the Aden Protectorate" is a misnomer, for it is not the policy of the British Government to govern the Protectorate directly, but to leave the control of its internal affairs to the local Arab Rulers in treaty relations with Her Majesty's Government. Under these treaties the British Government are bound to give the Rulers protection against external attack, and through the Governor of Aden the Rulers also receive, when necessary, assistance in preserving internal security and also advice and financial help. The Colony of Aden is a small, mainly urban, territory of about 75 square miles: the Protectorate is a largely mountainous and thinly populated area with comparatively small fertile cultivable parts and is about the same size as the United Kingdom. The role of the Governor in the Protectorate thus differs fundamentally from his position in the Colony, where he is the head of a direct administration, and the problems with which he has to deal in the two areas are very different.

The Arabs of the Protectorate tribes made a natural appeal to Hickinbotham, as they have done to many other British officers and others whose work has brought them into contact with them and who can understand their outlook on life. In this book he has given a fascinating account of the Protectorate and its people based on practical sympathy and intimate knowledge, as well as an interesting description of Aden Colony and his experience in it in successive capacities. Sir Tom's position as Governor of the Aden Colony and Protectorate also necessitated his playing an active part in dealing with the question of British relations with the Yemen, the independent Arab Kingdom which lies to the north of the western part of the Protectorate, and his book includes informative chapters about this troublesome problem.

It is a pleasure to me to commend this work to all those who seek reliable information about this part of the world and

Aden

than the majority of the inhabitants, although I have a high regard for the Ruler himself.

As we sat and waited for lunch to appear there was a general hum of conversation, but it was with some relief that eventually we saw more active preparations for the coming meal, as the servants came in and laid strips of cotton cloth on the floor down the centre of the room to do duty for a table. Then a living chain was formed between the dining-room and the kitchen, and with incredible speed dishes of rice and of curry and of fruit, and piles of flat round cakes of bread, came up the chain and down on to the table, until the cloth itself was almost invisible and there was a hot heavy smell of spices and meat, which in that densely-crowded room was rather overpowering. The dishes came to an end and there was one of those irritating and unnecessary pauses, common to the East on these occasions, while we sat waiting for the signal to begin with well-bred concealment of our impatience. We were hungry, but it would have been the worst of bad manners to show that we were in any way interested in what had been set before us until our host had invited us to begin.

Everybody had ceased to speak and most people were assessing the possibilities of the meal in a silence of expectancy. The Naib looked towards the door through which the food had been brought, waiting for an indication from his head servant that the last dish had been set in place. The servant appeared and nodded his head and the Naib glanced at me and said "Bismillah", which means "In the name of God", the polite invitation to begin. We all shuffled forward the few inches which separated us from the food and with many muttered "Bismillahs" started to pick delicately at what was nearest to us, thus showing our good manners.

It was at this moment, while the silence was profound and everybody's attention was occupied with the food, that it happened. There was a shattering explosion, and the pungent smell of gunpowder filled the room. The whole building shook as the ground trembled and plaster fell from the ceiling on to the food. The whole assembly, with the exception of three, came rapidly to their feet and looked wildly round while

2: Hickinbotham G-4, 5 (ca. 1931-ca. 1957)
1958 MM1 Aden MM1

had shot her and not her cow. A judicious gift of hard cash put an abrupt end to the cries and the old creature hustled the unfortunate cow along in front of her with a sharp pointed stick in her haste to get home to her family and display her wealth.

It was on my way back from this quail shoot that a small boy put me very neatly in my place. He was in charge of a string of camels moving down the middle of what passed for a road, each tied by a cord through the nose to the tail of the one in front. I was driving very carefully and I slowed down when I saw the camels so as not to frighten them, but in spite of my care they stampeded and got themselves all mixed up as a nylon line does when the reel overruns. The boy gave His Excellency the Governor, myself, one very expressive look as he rushed off to sort out the tangle and asked this pertinent or impertinent question—it depends on the point of view:

"Who gave birth to you?"

Rude, but very neat, and I burst out laughing, but not so my guards who were furious and had to be restrained from teaching the young man manners.

So much for the small game possibilities of Aden. There were still oryx in the Ruba-al-Khali, in spite of Land-Rovers, gazelle on the plains and ibex in the Wahidi country, but they are very hard to reach and impossible unless one happens to be stationed in the Protectorate and even then access is not easy; the country is wild and so are the people.

To the big game enthusiast (and I am no longer one since I sickened of seeing animals' heads on my walls), British Somaliland is only eighteen hours away across the Gulf of Aden by local steamer from Aden. There is game in plenty there, and always the chance, no more, of a lion. The last time I was there was to shoot sand grouse with the Governor, Sir Theodore Pike, in a dry season. We were stationed by the only water for many miles round and the birds came in hundreds to drink. We contented ourselves with taking a few single birds, to shoot at the coveys would have been murder, and then by mutual consent we stopped and watched. I was amazed at what I saw. We were standing within ten yards of the water